



UNITED STATES SENATOR · MICHIGAN
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Senator Stabenow, Colleagues Urge President Bush to Provide Emergency Funding for Amtrak

WASHINGTON—U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) yesterday joined a bipartisan coalition of her Senate colleagues in sending a letter to President Bush urging him to support the provision of \$200 million in emergency spending for Amtrak. Without the funding, Amtrak's president David Dunn has threatened to begin shutting down Amtrak lines this week.

"An Amtrak shut-down of this magnitude would mean tough times for American travelers. If these passenger trains come grinding to a halt, thousands in Michigan will be left stranded and our already-overcrowded highways will fill up even more," said Stabenow. "This is an urgent crisis that requires immediate attention from Congress."

Amtrak currently employs more than 23,000 workers and is a primary mode of transportation for many commuters throughout the nation. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Amtrak played a key role in helping stranded travelers get where they needed to go. An Amtrak shutdown would also affect many communities that use other commuter trains on Amtrak lines.

"We recognize that a long-term solution for Amtrak's funding problems is sorely needed—and we have a number of bills currently moving through the Senate that will address that need. However, if we do not provide this funding soon, we will lose a passenger rail system that we have spent 31 years building," said Stabenow.

The United States Senate has been taking action to address long-term plans for Amtrak. On April 18, the Senate Commerce Committee passed, by a vote of 20-3, the National Defense Rail Act, which, among other things, authorizes appropriations for Amtrak assistance and requires an independent audit of Amtrak operations.

Amtrak was formed by Congress in 1971 to relieve the passenger burden on private freight railroads. In FY2001, total Michigan ridership exceeded 533,000. Amtrak serves Michigan with three daily round-trips on the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac route, a daily Chicago-East Lansing-Port Huron-Toronto route and a daily Chicago-Grand Rapids route.

Copies of the letter sent yesterday to President Bush are available from Senator Stabenow's office upon request.